Council Highlights: December, 1999

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of November and December 1999.

Working Group on University Capacity continues activities

The Working Group on University Capacity, co-chaired by Dr. Robert Christie, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Dr. Ian Clark, President of COU, has met on five occasions in the last two months. The group has reviewed enrolment projections, price-induced cost projections and the way in which the evolved corridor funding system deals with the shared objectives of government and the universities. The Working Group reported to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities prior to her meeting with Executive Heads on November 16, 1999.

As part of the process, the universities conducted a review of economies and efficiencies in university operations, described in more detail below. Although the primary focus of the Working Group is the development of a multi-year plan to deal with the expected enrolment bulge, it is anticipated that the government will make use of the material generated by the Working Group in determining the increases in transfer payments to universities for 2000-2001.

Economies and efficiencies in university operations reviewed

In November 1999, the Working Group on University Capacity undertook a *Review of Economies and Efficiencies in University Operations*. The Working Group looked at the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the operation of Ontario universities by examining a number of measures that Ontario universities have taken to reduce costs, avoid increases, improve efficiency and improve the quality of service delivery.

The review documents a host of activities that Ontario universities are taking to enhance economy and efficiency through co-operative efforts and collaborative arrangements, through a rigourous review of ancillary and administrative operations, and by generating more revenue from sources other than the provincial government. It shows that the ratio of administrative expenditures to total expenditures is one of the lowest in Canada.

Task Force on Learning Technologies created

A new COU Task Force on Learning Technologies, chaired by David Johnston, President of the University of Waterloo, was created to examine key issues facing universities related to the use of learning technologies in teaching and learning. Representatives from the university community, industry and government make up its membership.

The members of the Task Force are:

- Dr. Andrew Bjerring, President and CEO, CANARIE
- Dr. Ted Chamberlin, Professor, Department of English, University of Toronto

- Tony Ciceretto, Vice-President, Marketing, Bell Canada
- Murna Dalton, Vice-President, SGI
- Gaylen Duncan, President and CEO, ITAC
- Dr. Catherine Henderson, President, Ontario College of Art & Design
- Doug Hull, Director General, Industry Canada
- David Johnston, President, University of Waterloo
- David Kennedy, Director of Information and Communications, Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology
- John Kutcy, General Manager Education Industry, IBM Canada Ltd.
- James Mackay, Director of Universities Branch, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Dr. Ross Paul, President, University of Windsor
- Dr. Tim Pychyl, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Carleton University
- Dr. Alan Weedon, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Western Ontario
- Dr. Harvey Weingarten, Provost and Vice-President, Academic, McMaster University
- Dr. Norm Shulman, Executive Director, OPAS

The Task Force will publish a report of its recommendations in March 2000.

Royal Bank's John Cleghorn featured speaker at Visionary Seminar

On January 25, 2000, John Cleghorn, Chair and CEO of the Royal Bank, will be the featured speaker at the fourth Visionary Seminar organized by the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS). Mr. Cleghorn will discuss the implications of technology and globalization for the financial services sector with a specific focus on entrepreneurship.

Fifteen Ontario universities will be participating in the seminar, which will originate at Wilfrid Laurier University and be transmitted live to other campuses. The OPAS Visionary Seminar series enables senior students and faculty to learn about the future directions of a major industry, while providing universities with an opportunity to invite local business leaders to a business-relevant event on campus that showcases the respective university and its multi-faceted activities.

Review of new secondary school curriculum completed

The Curriculum Validation Project completed its last round of meetings in November and December. The project allowed representatives of Ontario universities to review the proposed new Grade 11 and 12 courses to help ensure that they are designed to prepare students for study at a university level.

The program began over a year ago with the circulation of draft secondary school curriculum documents among the appropriate departments and committees of COU's member institutions. The views expressed were reported to subject committees composed of faculty members nominated by their universities. The subject committees consulted among their own members and with other colleagues, then presented their recommendations about the new courses in written submissions to the Ministry of Education and in meetings held to review the curriculum material with the writing teams and representatives of the Ministry and community colleges.

This project represents the most extensive engagement, to date, of the Ontario university community with the secondary school program of studies. More than 400 faculty members and academic administrators participated, by submitting written comments on the curriculum documents, or by serving as local co-ordinators at their universities or as members of the provincial subject committees. COU has stressed that the success of the new program depends heavily upon the adequacy of resources, the in-service education of teachers in disciplines where additional qualifications may be necessary, and the measures employed for implementing and monitoring the courses.

Ontario universities have expressed their willingness and desire to participate in the next phases of curriculum and to extend the relation between secondary education and postsecondary education institutions that was successfully established during the Curriculum Validation Project.

Over 150 attend conference on building competitive city regions

On November 17, COU and OPAS, working with the Canadian Urban Institute, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO), hosted a conference, *Building Competitive City Regions in the Knowledge Economy: The Power of Business-Community-Educator Partnerships*.

The conference, chaired by the Hon. David Crombie with Steve Paikin, host of TVO's *Studio 2*, facilitating the discussion, was attended by more than 150 representatives of universities, colleges, government and industry. Dr. Paul Davenport, Chair of COU and President of the University of Western Ontario, and David Lindsay, CEO of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, were the keynote speakers. A number of panelists, including Michael Lazaridis, President of Research in Motion, stressed the importance of university-based research in developing and sustaining knowledge-based enterprise, which, ultimately, affects an area's economic viability.

Second graduate placement survey underway

The 1999-2000 graduate placement survey was mailed to all 1997 graduates of Ontario universities in the first week of November 1999. As of December 7, 1999, a total of 8,341 completed responses were received – a response rate, so far, of 24%. The first reminder notice to complete the survey will be mailed to graduates during the third week in December 1999. In spring 2000, the joint COU and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Steering Committee will review the survey results.

Last year's survey, which was mailed to all 1996 graduates of Ontario universities, found that Ontario university graduates are doing exceptionally well in the job market. The overall employment rate was 96.7% for graduates of undergraduate degree programs, two years after graduation. More than 25,000 surveys were completed, representing 54% of the Class of 1996.

Working Group on Post-Diploma Degrees to issue report

The Working Group on Post-Diploma Degrees, chaired by Dr. Rowland Smith, Vice-President, Academic, Wilfrid Laurier University, commissioned a paper this fall that will examine existing

degree-completion arrangements. This December, the group met with representatives of the college sector to discuss issues surrounding the articulation of degree-completion programs. The Working Group's interim report will introduce the commissioned paper, both of which are scheduled to be released in the new year.

OUAC wins international "Best Practices" award

On November 9, 1999, the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council named the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) the winner of its 1999 Best Practices competition for work on the Ontario Universities' Electronic Transcript System (OUETS). The Washington-based organization is a coalition of colleges and universities, government agencies, higher education associations, lenders, guarantors, and data software and service providers.

The OUETS submission, *A Model of an Electronic Standardization Initiative*, outlines the efforts to use standardized data definitions, data formats, encryption protocol, and process to manage the ordering, distribution and receipt of academic transcripts across Ontario's university system in support of province-wide applications for admission.

The process is simple and highly cost-effective. Applicants record their university student number on a transcript request form that accompanies their admission application. OUAC's computer retrieves the data from the universities the applicants have attended and transfers that data electronically to the universities selected on their application form. This automated process, using the international EDI data standard, ensures the transfer of complete and accurate data, virtually eliminating fraudulent transcripts. Applicants pay a fee for each transcript requested, and this entire fee is transferred to the universities.

This past year, 35,054 transcripts were processed through this system, and $281,872 in transcript fees was distributed to the universities. The universities also saved the expense of producing hard-copy transcripts and mailing them to institutions participating in this new system.

Several Ontario universities are fully EDI-ready and able to both receive and send transcripts electronically, while others are still implementing this state-of-the-art procedure. In the near future, universities and colleges outside of Ontario will be joining this activity and, soon, transcripts for non-applicants (such as graduate students and teacher certificate candidates) will also be routed through this system.

CUCC's mandate extended

The mandate of the College-University Consortium Council (CUCC) has been extended for a period of between one and two years. The CUCC will continue to promote, facilitate and co-ordinate college and university joint ventures to achieve agreements that provide a seamless continuum of learning opportunities in Ontario's postsecondary system. One such landmark agreement, signed on May 6, 1999, was the Ontario College-University Degree-Completion Accord, which sets out a series of principles for developing degree-completion arrangements between colleges and universities, and a matrix to guide the creation of degree-completion arrangements and degree programs.

Report submitted on the role of university research

The findings of a study on the role of postsecondary research in Ontario's broader innovation strategy was submitted to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology on December 9, 1999. The study was commissioned by the Government of Ontario and conducted by Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum, Vice-President of Research and International Relations, University of Toronto. The study's report, Growing Ontario's Innovation System: The Strategic Role of University Research,

focuses on five key recommendation themes that speak to the importance of partnership among industry, government and universities to achieve innovation, and features a wide range of ideas for action.

Ontario universities actively participated in the consultation process that led up to the submission of the report.

Ontario College-University Transfer Guide a "hit"

Last December, the CUCC launched the Ontario College-University Transfer Guide on the web (www.ocutg.on.ca) to provide information about institutional credit-transfer policies, articulation and credit-transfer agreements, and collaborative programs between Ontario colleges and universities. The regular number of monthly "hits" confirms that the searchable database is, indeed, a valuable resource.

The web site is now undergoing a technical upgrade and a content review; both are scheduled for completion in spring 2000. Through consultation with college and university stakeholders, the CUCC defined the improvements that will enhance the guide's accessibility, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and its value to students, teachers, counsellors and researchers for postsecondary educational planning purposes.

Phase Two of the guide, completed in September 1999, provided all institutions with an electronic template that will enable them to enter the terms of their out-of-province agreements on their respective web site and link their web page to the guide.

National Forum on Prior Learning Assessment

COU and OPAS were among the sponsors of a National Forum on Prior Learning Assessment, which was organized by the Canadian Labour Force Development Board and Human Resources Development Canada and held on November 13-16, 1999. As part of the four-day forum, COU organized and presented a session highlighting the recent advances in prior learning assessment at Ontario universities that included updates on the progress of other Canadian universities in the area.

Interest expressed in developing OPAS national network

At the request of the federal government and industry members, OPAS has begun to explore the feasibility of a network of regional "nodes," modeled on OPAS, to form a national network. At a meeting held in Victoria, B.C., on November 12, 1999, 11 industry representatives along with several representatives from the universities, university colleges and government expressed considerable interest in developing a national network of industry-university partnerships.

OPAS provides a central point of entry to universities and links leading-edge knowledge and instructors at university campuses across the province to knowledge-based businesses.

Facts and Figures due out in the new year

The sixth volume of *Facts and Figures: A Compendium of Statistics on Ontario Universities* is due out in the beginning of the new year. The report, produced annually, provides the latest data available on aggregate statistical and graphical information on such topics as Ontario population; applicants/registrants; students; faculty and staff; and finances and physical facilities as it relates to Ontario universities. The full report will also be made available on the COU web site.

(www.cou.on.ca). A *Highlights* brochure summarizing the report's key points is also in the works.

Latest issue of *For the Record*

COU published its fifth issue of *For the Record*, the newsletter that provides updates on issues and events affecting Ontario universities and postsecondary education in the province. This issue (Vol. 2, No. 3) leads off with an extensive review of the Queen's Park press conference that Ontario university presidents held on October 8, 1999; provides an update on Council members and listings of committees; summarizes the discussions at the September retreat of Executive Heads; highlights the creation of a new working group and task force; and much more. If you would like a copy, visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca) or call (416) 979-2165 ext. 236.